

THE LORD CARES FOR HIS OWN

(Psalm 23)

...When we are young, our parents care for us by providing for our needs. How much more does our Lord care for us, not just for a few years, but during every moment of our lives. He doesn't do this for others, but He does this for those of us who own Him as Lord and Savior.

...Psalm 23 is perhaps the best-loved psalm of all 150, and maybe the best loved chapter in the Bible. Spurgeon called it "the pearl of the psalms," for it has dried many tears.

...This "old friend" provides us with hope when days are filled with frustration, depression, grief, and despair... Often, the words of this psalm are the last words on the lips of a dying saint.

TWO FUNCTIONS OF THE LORD AS SHEPHERD AS HE CARES FOR US AS HIS SHEEP. It is Jesus who is this wonderful shepherd! (John 10:14)

I. The Lord Provides For Our Every Need. (vv.1-3)

- A. First of all, Jesus provides rest for us. "He makes me lie down in green pastures"
 - 1. This Shepherd is the LORD. Signifies His utter self-sufficiency and timelessness.
 - 2. The sweetest word here: "He is MY Shepherd." This is Jesus! He is mine and I am...
 - 3. We are likened to sheep. Sheep lack everything. They are said to be the most helpless of all animals.
 - 4. Rest. It is odd that the psalm begins this way as you would expect activity to be first and then rest. The Christian life begins with resting in the finished work of Jesus. (Matthew 11:28) "Come unto Me ...I will give you rest."
- B. Jesus provides physical strength and stamina for His sheep. "He restores my soul."
 - 1. The word "soul" is the Hebrew word for life. Since shepherding is the scene, this probably refers to "a restoring to physical health."
 - 2. A "cast sheep" is not far from death. The shepherd is the only one who can restore this sheep. The sheep cannot get up on its own.
- C. Jesus provides guidance for each of His own. "He guides me in paths..."
 - 1. This guidance is through the Word and leads to right living. "righteousness"
 - 2. Sheep are such stupid animals, and "maybe the most stupid on earth." One aspect of their stupidity is their tendency to wander away from the shepherd. "prone to wander, Lord I feel it...prone to leave the God I love." No other livestock requires more careful handling than do sheep.

II. The Lord Protects Us From Every Danger. (vv.4-6)

...for we live in a world that is filled with danger. Don't be fooled.

- A. The nature and extent of the Lord's protection is pictured. (v.4)
 - 1. Jesus is able to protect us in the moments of greatest danger. "though the valleys."
...The valleys often contain wild men and wild animals. This valley of the shadow of death is as much God's path for us as the green pastures.
 - 2. The shepherd's tools, the rod and staff, are what he uses to protect us.
...The rod was used to both chasten the sheep and count them.
...The staff, which is much longer, was used to destroy the sheep's enemies.
- B. The result of His presence and protection allow us to be free of fear. (v. 5)
 - 1. For Jesus is always with us. We are never left alone. Never.
 - 2. This allows us to amazingly banquet and enjoy His abundant provision. "a table."
...Because of His care, we can feast with enemies (trouble) all about.
- C. David concludes this by counting his blessings. (v. 6)
 - 1. God's blessings will pursue us throughout life. "goodness and mercy"
 - 2. God's home in heaven will be our home forever and ever.

NOTE SOME THINGS GOD HAS TAUGHT ME THROUGH MY RECENT VALLEY EXPERIENCE...

LESSONS FOR OUR LIVES: